

Washington, D.C. – Rep. Charlie Wilson (OH-6) today backed a bipartisan Farm Bill that will strengthen American agriculture, help families facing high food costs and makes a substantial commitment to land conservation and our energy independence. Officially titled the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act, the legislation passed by a vote of 318—106.

“The Farm Bill is not only good for farmers, it’s good for all working families,” Wilson said. “I was proud to support this bill because it ensures food security for families in need.”

Nearly three-fourths of the Farm Bill will support nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. The legislation’s updates to the food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012. The bill also provides much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) funding by \$1.25 billion – with \$50 million for immediate shortages at food pantries. Additionally, the bill helps schools provide healthy snacks to students, with \$1 billion for free fresh fruits and vegetables.

Struggling farmers will also receive much needed aid from the legislation. The Farm Bill reforms disaster assistance to make it a permanent, paid-for program for farmers with crops stricken by natural disasters such as drought and flood.

“Without America’s farmers, we wouldn’t be able to feed our nation and the world,” Wilson said. “This bill acknowledges their critical contribution.”

Consumers will benefit from country-of-origin labeling for meat and produce that is made mandatory by the legislation. This requirement took six years to accomplish.

To encourage conservation efforts, the Farm Bill boosts programs that reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters by \$7.9 million.

Under the bill, farmers will play a greater role in fueling our energy independence. The Farm Bill invests \$1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources. It takes another critical step in transitioning biofuels beyond corn to non-food crops and sources such as switchgrass, woodchips and corn stalks.

The Farm Bill makes critical investments in rural communities. For example it authorizes the Rural Firefighters and Emergency Medical Service Assistance Program to provide improved emergency medical services in rural areas. In addition, it will help connect rural America. The bill improves access to broadband telecommunications services in rural areas with a great focus on the rural communities of greatest need. It extends and makes major changes to the broadband program to focus loans on underserved rural areas.

“This is great news for Ohio’s Sixth District,” Wilson said. “Many counties like Lawrence, Meigs, Washington and Monroe still don’t have access to essential broadband infrastructure. This bill ensures that rural communities throughout our country are not being left behind in this increasingly technology-driven economy.”

Finally, the legislation also begins to end payments to farmers who don’t need the help, with the most significant reforms in over 30 years. The Farm Bill reduces direct farm payments by \$300 million and cuts federal payments to crop insurance companies that are making windfall profits due to higher crop prices by \$5.7 billion.

“This is just common sense reform,” Wilson said. “This legislation will make rural America stronger.”